

MLS 610**5/22-6/24, 2003****Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater****Tue/Th 5:45-9:30****Collecting Narratives: Oral Histories, Interviews and Family Stories**

Because the story of our life
becomes our life

Because each of us tells
the same story

but tells it differently
and none of us tells it
the same way twice.

Lisel Mueller, "Why We Tell Stories"

This is a course in narrative inquiry. Together we'll read, write, and research stories(texts), storytelling (performances), and methods(research approaches) of gathering and analyzing narratives. In order to consider narrative in as many ways as possible we'll watch films, listen to guest lecturers and share our research in progress. Since this is a small group, we will be able to run our course as a seminar with everyone contributing to our discussions.

Texts:

Behar, Ruth. Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story.

Bohannon, Paul and D. van der Elst. Asking and Listening : Ethnography as Personal Adaptation
Ehrenreich, Barbara. Nickle and Dime.

Fadiman, Anne. The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down.

E-Reserve articles under our course number at Jackson Library.

Projects:

You will complete one interviewing project for this class which you may present as a paper, a video, website, or as a storytelling performance.

A reflective notebook of responses to the readings, lectures, and class discussions which will be shared with me and others in our class.

5/22 Introduction to the course, to one another and to the ethics of collecting narratives.

Film: Stranger With A Camera

5/27 Gathering Oral History: Ruth Behar's Translated Woman (first half of book-164).

Assignment: Keep a notebook of responses to your reading, including your sense of the questions Behar posed.

5/29 Writing Oral History: Behar's Translated Woman (second half of book) and E-reserve article, "Writing in My Father's Name," by Ruth Behar from Women Writing Culture edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon.

Assignment: Bring sample of your favorite interview to share with class.

6/3 Interview Styles and Presentations: P. Bohannon and D. van der Elst: Asking and Listening :Ethnography as Personal Adapation , E-Reserve selections from Ursula Hegi's Tearing the Silence and from Inviting the Wolf In: Thinking About Difficult Stories and Chapter 7, "Researching People: The Collaborative Listener" from Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research by Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein Paul Russ Film, Healing Without A Cure

6/5 Theoretical Grounding: E-Reserve articles: "Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History," by Anderson, Armitage, Jack and Wittner; "Black Women's Life Stories: Reclaiming Self in Narrative Texts" by Etter-Lewis; and "Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Doing Oral History among Working-Class Women and Men" by Karen Olson and Linda Shopes from Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History and "Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies," by Susan Chase from Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives."Chapter e-reserve chapter 7-- "Researching People: The Collaborative Listener."

Assignment: Project Proposal Due

6/10 Interviewing about Work: Barbara Ehrenreich's Nickel and Dimed, E-reserve selections from Studs Terkel, Working : People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do. Guest Lecturer Jane Stephens on interviewing women as leaders.

6/12 Interviewing about Sexuality: E-reserve "Listening to Adolescent Girls Voice the Erotic," from Constructing the Erotic by B. Blodgett and Kate Bornstein's Gender Outlaw
Assignment: Bring a transcript for analysis Guest Lecturer Ann May on mothers/daughters discussions of sexuality.

6/17 Interviewing about Spirituality: Anne Fadiman's The Spirit Cat ches You and You Fall Down, and E-Reserve selections from Zora Neale Hurston, Mules and Men.
Film: The Devil's Playground

6/19 Writing it Up: E-Reserve, Chapters 4 and 5 from H. L. Goodall's Writing the New Ethnography.
Assignment: Bring drafts of studies or reflections to class to share.

6/24 Sharing Our Studies

This evening will be focused on presenting and celebrating your work.

Bibliography

Bateson, Mary Catherine. Composing A Life. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989.

Covington, Dennis. Salvation on Sand Mountain. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.

Kutsche, Paul. Field Ethnography: A Manual for Doing Cultural Antropology. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Spradley, James. The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, 1979.

See also, The Oral History Review, a journal published by the University of California Press.